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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 0297

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3631

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1449

RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY 0102

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1316

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1885

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000472

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SUBJECT: EC TROIKA IN TURKMENISTAN: THE HEADLINE WAS  
ENERGY

REF: ASHGABAT 0328

Classified By: CDA Richard E. Hoagland: 1.4(B), (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The April 9-10 EU Troika-Central Asia Ministerial added to Turkmenistan's international and regional credentials. The media headline from the event was Turkmenistan guarantees at least 10 bcm/y natural gas for Europe/Nabucco, although it took a while for media commentators to realize the question was still open of how to get the gas from Turkmenistan's borders to Europe. Turkmenistan was unable to sign the EU bilateral energy memorandum of understanding because it requested numerous word changes late in the game. The general impression of the bilateral and plenary sessions was Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan support regional approaches to regional problems, Uzbekistan was prickly and not in the mood for regionalism, Turkmenistan was guarded but tried to be helpful, and Kazakhstan left a bit of self-impression of first among equals. The value of the Troika ministerial was a clear signal that the EC is increasingly engaged in Central Asia. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The European Council held its annual Troika meeting with foreign ministers from all five Central Asian countries April 9-10 in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. On April 9, each of the four members of the "Troika" -- EU Special Representative for Central Asia Pierre Morel, representing European Council Secretary General Javier Solana; European Commissioner for

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External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy Benita Ferraro-Waldner; Slovenian Foreign Minister Dmitrij Rupel, representing the current EU Presidency; and French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, representing the next EU Presidency -- met separately in a series of meetings with Turkmenistan's President Berdimuhamedov and the foreign ministers of each of the Central Asian countries. There was

a plenary session April 10 in which each of the Central Asian delegations delivered a speech on a prepared topic.

¶ 13. (C) Ferrero-Waldner on April 10 officially opened Europa House in Ashgabat that is the precursor to a full EU representation by 2010 (reftel). Europa House Coordinator Emilio Valli said that the idea to hold the Troika in a Central Asian capital grew out of the EU's strategy for Central Asia. The European Union wants to sign Partnership and Cooperation Agreements with all Central Asian countries, including Turkmenistan. Once signed, the EU can begin to focus on trade. However, none of the countries is especially close to achieving the human rights and other benchmarks necessary for signing these agreements. As a result, the EC has developed a new Development Cooperation Initiative (DCI), which will replace the EU's TACIS program, to provide broadbased cooperation directed toward spurring reform. The Troika meeting is one of the vehicles through which the EU coordinates that cooperation.

#### ENERGY A PRIORITY ISSUE

¶ 14. (C) According to Valli, energy was a priority issue for the Troika's discussions with Turkmenistan. President Berdimuhamedov guaranteed 10 bcm/y of natural gas for Europe/Nabucco, and eventually more when new sources are exploited, but made clear Europe would be responsible for transporting it from Turkmenistan's border.

¶ 15. (C) The European Union and Turkmenistan have been preparing an energy memorandum of understanding (MOU) which was to have been signed at the meeting that was more hortatory than obligatory. According to Valli, Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister for Oil and Gas

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Tachberdi Tagiyev had visited Brussels on February 23 to finalize the MOU's wording. The EC believed the MOU was on track for signature until the beginning of April, when Turkmenistan submitted new, non-substantive changes that, nevertheless, will need to be approved by each EU member.

#### TURKMENISTAN HUMAN RIGHTS

¶ 16. (C) The media reported, without going into details, that the Troika representatives also discussed human rights, and expanding cooperation in the educational, science, and counter-narcotics sectors. Valli reported DCI is preparing to sign, on April 15, an agreement for a new multi-year program with Turkmenistan's Institute for Democracy and Human Rights that will focus on drafting/revamping laws on human rights institutions and judicial and criminal laws.

#### BERDIMUHAMEDOV TO VISIT TO PARIS

¶ 17. (U) During his primarily bilateral meeting with Berdimuhamedov, Kouchner delivered an invitation from President Sarkozy to visit Paris in the second half of 2008, once France becomes EU President. Berdimuhamedov accepted.

¶ 18. (C) Normally French Ambassador Christian Lechervy would brief after such an event, first his EU colleagues, then the others separately, but he departed Ashgabat with FM Kouchner for Paris and is not expected to return until late in the week of April 14. In lieu of a detailed briefing, Embassy Ashgabat obtained a hard copy of the Council of Europe informal brief for members dated April 14. Below, we summarize the over-all conclusions and the bilateral sessions.

#### ¶ 19. (C) OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

-- First Troika meeting with all Central Asian foreign ministers present; atmosphere was good; priority and concept papers generally welcomed.

-- Confirmed the importance of differentiation among

countries and the need for bilateral approaches.

-- Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan agreed to enter into Human Rights Dialogs with the EU; Uzbekistan agreed to a Human Rights Dialog in May or June.

-- Willingness to cooperate with the EU on energy, but countries ask for clear projects from the EU for the transport of natural gas.

#### ¶10. (C) KAZAKHSTAN

-- Gave details on the Way to Europe program's five dimensions: technology transfer, institutional norms, energy dialog, human dimension, and trade.

-- Criticized the EU's formulation of country priorities and distribution of assistance funds among the five Central Asian countries.

-- Foreign Minister Tazhin briefed on preparations for OSCE Chairmanship, including reform of law on political parties, election law, defamation/penal code, and media.

#### ¶11. (C) KYRGYZSTAN BILATERAL

-- Kyrgyzstan is looking for opportunities to restore national production capacities (industrial and technological park, agriculture, engineering, information, light industry,

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and food processing); proposed an EU-Kyrgyzstan plan until 2013 for this purpose.

-- Agreed to initial Human Rights Dialog starting in June 2008 at expert level, and suggested a regional dialog.

-- Water Academy Project will be pursued with or without the EU; water summit planned for the end of 2008.

#### ¶12. (C) TAJIKISTAN BILATERAL

-- Presidential Economic Adviser Davlatov named as national coordinator for EU-Central Asian strategy.

-- Unlike some other countries, Tajikistan emphasizes regional cooperation, especially on water, energy, border security, narcotics control, and demining. Foreign Minister Zarifi offered Tajik facilities for training Afghans.

-- No objection to Human Rights Dialog.

-- Requested EU conduct feasibility studies for seven hydroelectric projects; Ferrero-Waldner confirmed the EU's readiness.

-- Made pitch to adapt, but not limit, its OSCE mandate.

-- Requested to host next EU Troika-Central Asia meeting in Dushanbe.

#### ¶13. (C) TURKMENISTAN

-- Ready to continue human rights dialog, especially with practical cooperation projects.

-- Willing to sell natural gas to Europe, even though it will not violate existing contracts to non-EU partners; sells its gas at its borders for world prices; ready for PSAs in the Caspian and service contracts onshore.

-- Ferrero-Waldner asked Turkmenistan to consider participation in a high-level meeting on energy for the development of the Trans-Caspian Corridor and to appoint sherpas to prepare this meeting (NFI).

¶14. (C) UZBEKISTAN BILATERAL

-- Denounced EU "double standards" and insisted on respect for each country's individuality since "there is no leading country in the region."

-- Generally hesitated on regional initiatives and insisted on bilateral approaches for education and rule-of-law initiatives and water and energy issues.

-- Rupel, Morel, and Ferrero-Waldner sent a strong message on human rights, naming individual cases; requested registration of the new Human Rights Watch representative.

-- Uzbekistan confirmed ICRC access to prisons; pointed out EU weaknesses on human rights, including "islamophobia."

-- Would consider an energy MOU.

-- Will not participate in either the regional Water Academy or the regional water summit in Bishkek.

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